



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
Northwest Region
7600 Sand Point Way N.E., Bldg. 1
Seattle, WA 98115

AUG 18 2003

Salmon Listings Petitioners
[See attached list]

Re: Petitions to End or Revise Salmon and Steelhead Listings

Dear Petitioners:

I am writing to update you on NOAA Fisheries' schedule for responding to the October 2001 petitions to delist 14 Northwest populations ("evolutionarily significant units," ESUs) of salmon and steelhead that currently are listed under the Endangered Species Act. NOAA Fisheries found that those petitions presented substantial supporting information, and consequently undertook a review of the statuses of those 14 ESUs, as well as of 10 other currently listed ESUs. 67 Fed.Reg. 6215 (February 11, 2002). NOAA Fisheries similarly accepted for decision two later petitions to redefine 15 listed ESUs, to include only naturally-spawned fish, and one petition to delist a California coho salmon ESU. 67 Fed.Reg. 48601 (July 25, 2002).

I recognize and appreciate your frustration due to the time that it has taken for NOAA Fisheries to act on your petitions. On behalf of NOAA Fisheries, I apologize.

NOAA Fisheries' responses to all of your petitions will be in the form of status review updates of all 26 currently listed ESUs, 67 Fed.Reg. 79898 (December 31, 2002), leading to a proposed rule revising the existing listings, as indicated by the status review updates and in accordance with Alsea Valley Alliance v. Evans, 161 F.Supp.2d 1154 (D. Oreg. 2001).

NOAA Fisheries expects to issue the proposed rule by March 2004, and to issue a final rule within one further year. We believe that this is a realistic schedule and fully intend to meet it.

For further information, please contact Garth Griffin, of the Northwest Region's Protected Resources Division, at 503-231-2005.

Sincerely,

for D. Robert Lohn
Regional Administrator



cc: Donna Darm
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Salmon Listings Petitioners

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